

Date of Hearing: June 29, 2011

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

Paul J. Cook, Chair

SB 813 (Veterans Affairs) – As Amended: May 3, 2011

SUBJECT: Public postsecondary education: veterans' enrollment.

SUMMARY: This bill grants priority class enrollment to California resident members or former members of the Armed Forces of the United States, as specified, within 4 years of leaving active duty.

Since the bill imposes additional duties on community college districts, the bill imposes a state-mandated local program. This bill provides for reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs incurred pursuant to the bill provisions, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state.

EXISTING LAW requires California Community Colleges ("CCC") and California State University ("CSU"), and requests University of California, to give priority for registration for enrollment to any member or former member of the Armed Services for any academic term attended at one of these institutions within two years of leaving active duty, if the institution already administers a priority enrollment system [Education Code § 66025.8, established by SB 272 (Runner), Chapter 356, Statutes of 2007].

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, this bill will result in a potentially significant reimbursable mandate on CCC and minor and absorbable costs to CSU.

COMMENTS: This bill extends the period during which a veteran student will receive priority registration for classes. The bill does not affect admissions policies. While it is always difficult to balance one student's need against another's, there are several policy considerations in favor of this bill:

1. These students are men and women who have served the Nation, many of whom have placed their lives at risk, and all of whom have sworn to support and defend the Constitution of the United States.
2. It takes time to reintegrate into civilian life after a period of active duty and then a discharge; a service member's service identity, rank and role may be a major part of his or her identity. Take for example the Marine Corps saying, "Once a Marine, always a Marine." Discharge means a major identity shift and the support structure of the military is removed while that shift takes place.
3. Reintegration may be especially challenging for those many veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts who have been deployed and or in combat zones multiple times and for years of time during their period of service, and particularly for those who have been injured or disabled.
4. Even the most motivated student still needs to meet the next available application window and be admitted to the next available class; that admission date may be a year of

time away. For example, for the University of California, applicants for the fall semester 2011 must've applied during November 2010. So for the veteran who was discharged after November, 2010, he or she could not even apply for UC until July 2011, for potential winter or spring admission (January 2012 or later).

5. In the interest of diversity, military veterans bring something unique to a learning community. Their life experience, knowledge, and motivation will benefit institutions of higher education.

Related legislation: AB 649 (Harkey), would've expanded priority enrollment for veterans from two to five years but was subsequently held in the Senate Education Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Community Colleges Board of Governors
Community College League of California
University of California

Opposition

None received.

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